

REMARKS

The Office Action dated October 17, 2008 has been received and carefully studied.

The Examiner newly rejects claims 1, 2, 4-6, 18021 and 23 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over newly cited Bray, U.S. Patent No. 3,542,119 and Brown '248. The Examiner also rejects claim 7 as being unpatentable over Bray and Brown further in view of Regunathan, et al.; claims 8, 10-12 and 22 as being unpatentable over Bray and Brown in view of Regunathan et al. and further in view of Whittier et al.; claims 13-16 as being unpatentable over Bray and Brown in view of Regunathan et al. in view of Whittier et al., and further in view of Burrows; claim 9 as being unpatentable over Bray and Brown in view of Regunathan et al. and further in view of Whittier et al., and further in view of Petrucci et al.; and claim 17 as being unpatentable over Bray and Brown in view of Regunathan et al. and further in view of Whittier et al., and further in view of Gundrum et al.

The rejections are respectfully traversed.

The Examiner states that Bray teaches a module comprising a cylindrical container 12 comprising a cylindrical wall closed at a first axial end by a head 20 and closed at a second axial end by a bottom 44. This is

not correct. The container 12 of Bray is closed at a first axial end (i.e., the top) by upper end plug 14, and is closed at a second axial end (i.e., the bottom) by a lower end plug 20 (see column 1, lines 69-74 and FIG. 1). "Bottom" 44 referred to by the Examiner is not a bottom. It is a septum positioned just past the axial midpoint of the container 12. Moreover, it does not close the container 12 as required by the instant claims; it divides the casing internally into an upper product water compartment and a lower membrane cartridge compartment. Still further, purified water flows through the septum 44 via channel 92 and upper check valve 93. Thus, the septum 44 does not only not define an end of the container 12, it also does not define a **closed** end.

The Examiner states that the Bray container is divided by a separator 36 into an external cylindrical space and an internal cylindrical space communicating with each other via one or more passages in the vicinity of the second axial end of the container, the separator comprising a cylindrical wall extending from the head to the bottom. This is incorrect. Again, the "head" required by the instant claims defines an end of the container, as does the "bottom". The shroud 36 of Bray does not comprise a cylindrical wall extending from said head to said bottom as required by the

instant claims. Instead, the shroud 36 extends only to septum 44, which is not an end and which does not close the container.

The Examiner admits that Bray does not teach the first axial end having an inlet and two outlets, and cites Brown as disclosing this feature. However, the mere fact that Brown discloses a module having an inlet and two outlets at the same end in no way makes it obvious to modify Bray to have an inlet and two outlets at the same end. In fact, Bray expressly teaches that the purified water must be directed up through inner tube 58 so that it can then flow into the top interior portion or product water compartment of the module, above septum 44, for further processing by activated carbon, and finally is discharged through outlet 108. This is the very portion of the module that the Examiner conveniently ignores in calling the septum a "closed end" of container 12, and now it is again ignored in concluding that simply because a module with an inlet and two outlets at the same end is known, it would be obvious to so modify Bray. Indeed, the Examiner states that all of the claimed elements were known in the prior art and one skilled in the art could have combined the elements as claimed by known methods with no change in their respective functions. How could one skilled in the art possibly combine the Brown

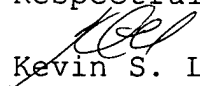
feature of an inlet and two outlets at one end with Bray? Doing so would necessitate the complete elimination of the top interior portion of the module 10 of Bray, which is completely contrary to Bray and would cause Bray to fail for its intended purpose. Applicants respectfully submit that the skilled artisan would immediately appreciate that Bray could not be so modified, since doing so would completely vitiate the function and purpose of the top portion of the module.

Applicants also continue to disagree with the Examiner's interpretation of Brown, as set forth in previous responses.

None of the secondary references supplies the above-noted deficiencies of Bray and Brown.

Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested in view of the foregoing.

Respectfully submitted,


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